

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 6466

FULL VETO
March 10, 2016

Brief Description: Creating a work group to develop a plan for removing obstacles for higher education students with disabilities.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Habib, Dammeier, Darneille, Liias, Roach, Keiser, Frockt, Becker, Hasegawa, Conway and McAuliffe).

Senate Committee on Higher Education
House Committee on Higher Education

Background: Federal Regulation. Postsecondary schools are prohibited from discriminating against students on the basis of disability under two federal laws. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act) prohibits entities that receive federal financial assistance, which includes institutions of higher education, from discriminating against otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) also protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination and covers a broader range of schools. The Rehabilitation Act applies to schools that receive federal funds and the ADA applies to state and locally funded and private-sector schools, with the exception of those that are controlled by religious entities. The Rehabilitation Act and ADA define individuals with disabilities as an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. Under the laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability, postsecondary schools are required to provide equal access to education to qualified students through academic adjustments and auxiliary aids and services, such as extending time allowed for taking tests and providing sign language interpreters. In addition, postsecondary schools must ensure physical access to buildings on campus.

Core Services. Each public institution of higher education must ensure that students with disabilities are reasonably accommodated within that institution. The institution must provide students with disabilities with the appropriate core service or services necessary to ensure equal access. Core services include:

- flexible procedures in the admissions process and early registration;
- sign language, or other interpreter services;
- textbooks and other education materials in large print, braille, electronic format or audiotape;
- provision of a reader, note taker, scribe or proof reader;

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- ongoing coordination of efforts to improve campus accessibility;
- facilitation of physical access;
- access to adaptive equipment;
- referral to appropriate campus resources;
- flexibility in test taking arrangements; and,
- notification of the higher education's policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of disability.

Accommodations. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities must be provided as appropriate for all aspects of college and university life, including recruitment, applications, enrollment, registration, financial aid, coursework, research, academic counseling, housing programs, and nonacademic services.

Summary: The Council of Presidents (COP) must convene a workgroup to develop a plan for removing obstacles for students with disabilities. The work group must include:

- representatives from the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, four-year institutions, Washington Student Achievement Council, and statewide student associations; and
- at least two students with disabilities selected by student associations.

The plan must, but is not limited to:

- standardize medical documentation requirements;
- standardize intake and review procedures; and
- develop best practices for institutions to provide outreach to and help prepare students for transmitting accommodations information and documentation to their next institution.

The COP must provide the plan to the higher education committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2016.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	48	0
House	97	0